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SUBJECT: BARBADOS CABINET RESHUFFLE INCLUDES FORMER
OPPOSITION LEADER

11. SUMMARY: On February 18, Prime Minister Owen Arthur announced a major cabinet reshuffle after months of speculation that a change was eminent. The reorganization added three new ministers to the cabinet, including former opposition leader Clyde Mascoll as Minister of State in the PM,s office, overseeing the Ministry of Finance. Six ministers, including Deputy Prime Minister Mia Mottley, had their portfolios changed, and two ministers were stripped of their positions completely. End Summary.

Mascoll,s Reward

12. After leaving his post as president of the opposition Democratic Labor Party (DLP) in mid-January and crossing the floor to the ruling Barbados Labor Party (BLP) (septel), Clyde Mascoll has been rewarded with a seat in the Prime Minister,s cabinet, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance. This move marks the first time in Barbados, history that a former opposition leader has crossed over to the ruling party and received a cabinet-level position. PM Owen Arthur altered his own portfolio, dropping his responsibilities as Minister of Economic Affairs and the Civil Service, while retaining Minister of Finance, among others. How much influence Mascoll will have in his new role under the PM remains to be seen. (Note: Mascoll's inclusion in the new cabinet, while noteworthy, is seen largely as a demotion, and he has been criticized in the media for not negotiating a better position before crossing over. End Note.)

Mottley,s Lot

13. Deputy Prime Minister Mia Mottley will now head the newly created Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, leaving her former post as Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs. PM Arthur indicated that this shift would give Mottley the opportunity gain experience in the economic realm and allow her to focus on policy implementation. (Note: This shift plays directly to recent speculation that Arthur is grooming Mottley to replace him as Party Leader and PM sometime in the future. End Note.)

Booted

14. After seven years as Minister of Social Transformation, Hamilton Lashley, largely touted as a grassroots politician, was one of two ministers, and the only senior minister, removed in the cabinet reshuffle. Lashley, like Mascoll, is a former DLP member who switched parties in 1999 and was rewarded with an appointment as the GOB's first Minister of Social Transformation.

Other Appointments and Shifts

15. The two new ministerial appointments, in addition to Mascoll, are Trevor Prescod, Minister of Social Transformation and Reverend Joseph Atherley, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office. Rev. Atherley was formerly a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Other ministerial shifts, aside from Mottley, include:

- Dale Marshall, Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs from Minister of Industry and International Business (no replacement);
- Anthony Wood, Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports from Minister of Energy and Public Utilities;
- Reginald Farley, Minister of Housing and Lands from Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports;
- Elizabeth Thompson, Minister of Energy and Environment from Minister of Housing and Lands; and
- Rawle Eastmond, Minister of Labour and the Civil Service from Minister of Labour and Social Security.

Comment

16. Political observers and opposition leaders see the shuffle as merely a way for the PM to boost his popularity without making any substantial changes in the ability of the GOB to meet the challenges facing the nation. With elections looming in 2008 and Arthur and the BLP vying for an unprecedented fourth term, a shift like this is likely intended to show the party in a fresh light and keep the opposition on its toes. End Comment.
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